

## **FACT SHEET**

### **NATIONAL EMISSION STANDARDS FOR HAZARDOUS AIR POLLUTANTS FOR LEATHER FINISHING OPERATIONS**

#### **TODAY'S ACTION**

- On February 1, 2005, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) amended the National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants for Leather Finishing Operations.
- Because these amendments are minor, EPA is taking this action as a direct final rule. These amendments will:
  - clarify the frequency for categorizing leather product process types,
  - modify the definition of specialty leather,
  - add a definition for vacuum mulling, and
  - add an alternative procedure for determining the actual monthly solvent loss from an affected source.
- EPA estimates that today's direct final rule amendments will not alter the stringency of the standards and will have no adverse health nor environmental impacts.

#### **BACKGROUND**

- Toxic air pollutants, or air toxics, are those pollutants known or suspected to cause cancer or other serious health problems. The Clean Air Act of 1990 requires EPA to identify source categories that emit one or more of 188 listed air toxics. A "major source" of toxic air pollutants emits 10 tons or more per year of a single air toxic or 25 tons or more per year of a combination of air toxics.
- For any facility identified as a "major source", the Act requires EPA to develop standards that restrict emissions to levels consistent with the lowest-emitting (also called best-performing) plants.
- Air toxics are released during the application of coatings to a leather substrate. On February 27, 2002, EPA issued a final regulation to reduce emissions of toxic air pollutants from facilities involved in the finishing of leather. Facilities subject to the rule must be in compliance by February 27, 2005.
- Finished leather is used in products such as automobiles, furniture, shoes, garments, and handbags. Today's final regulation covers all processes used in the finishing of leather substrate. This includes the application, drying, coatings, storage and mixing of coatings, as well as any cleanup of the equipment.
- The final regulation will reduce emissions of glycol ethers, toluene, xylene and other air toxics from leather finishing facilities. Exposure to these air toxics can cause chronic

health disorders, such as central nervous and reproductive systems disorders, and acute health disorders, such as irritation of eyes, throat and mucous membranes.

- The final rule will reduce air toxic emissions from leather finishing facilities by about 375 tons annually, a 50 percent reduction from 1997 levels. In the final rule will reduce emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) by 750 tons from current levels. VOCs are a constituent of ground-level ozone (smog) which can aggravate a number of respiratory diseases, including asthma.

#### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION . . .**

- For further information about the direct final rule amendments, contact William Schrock of EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards at (919) 541-5032. The direct final rule amendments can be accessed from EPA's Technology Transfer Network (TTN) at the following Internet address: <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/caaa/t3pfpr.html>.
- For further information about how to access the TTN, call (919) 541-5384.